

## Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0224  
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE  
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 0294

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LONDON FOR ASST SEC. MOOSE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CLASSIFICATION, MRN, AND CAPTIONS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SF, WA  
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: PROSPECTS FOR PROXIMITY TALKS

REF: (A) PRETORIA 254, (B) STATE 011005

1. WHEN I WAS IN CAPE TOWN YESTERDAY, I STOPPED IN TO SEE  
BRAND FOURIE ABOUT THE VISIT OF THE NUCLEAR TECHNICAL TEAM  
(SEPARATE CABLE). HE BROUGHT UP SUBJECT OF PROXIMITY TALKS  
AND I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITY TO PROBE SAG INTENTIONS.

2. FOURIE SAID THAT FOLLOWING PRETORIA TALKS WITH CONTACT  
GROUP IN EARLY DECEMBER, PRIME MINISTER VORSTER MADE COMMIT-  
MENT (HE DID NOT SAY TO WHOM, BUT PRESUMABLY TO WHITE LEADERS  
IN SWA AND/OR POSSIBLY SAG CABINET) THAT HE WOULD WAIT  
UNTIL THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE AT THE END OF JANUARY TO  
SEE WHETHER THE FIVE WERE ABLE TO WORK OUT A SETTLEMENT.  
IF NOT, HE WOULD GO AHEAD DURING THAT DEBATE WITH THE  
ANNOUNCEMENT OF A DATE FOR ELECTIONS TO A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY  
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FOLLOWING THE OUTLINE OF THE FIVE POWER PROPOSALS. IN  
RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION ABOUT WHAT THE PM PLANNED TO SAY ON  
THAT OCCASION, FOURIE REPLIED THAT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE THIS REMAINED  
TO BE DECIDED. I POINTED OUT THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES SUCH AN  
ANNOUNCEMENT COULD HAVE FOR THE NAMIBIA NEGOTIATION AND URGED  
A PROMPT, FAVORABLE RESPONSE TO OUR REQUEST THAT THE SAG SET  
A DATE FOR THE NEW YORK TALKS AS EARLY IN FEBRUARY AS POSSIBLE.

NOTING PRESS SPECULATION THAT BOTHA WOULD PROBABLY NOT ATTEND NEW YORK TALKS BUT MIGHT SEND FOURIE (BOTHA HAD HINTED AT THIS TO PRETORIA FIVE -- PARA 3 OF REFTTEL A), I ALSO SAID I HOPED THAT BOTHA WOULD BE ABLE TO ATTEND. FOURIE'S RESPONSE WAS TO (A) DISCLAIM ANY KNOWLEDGE OF HIS GOING IN BOTHA'S PLACE; (B) STRESS THAT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT FOR BOTHA TO LEAVE SOUTH AFRICA DURING FEBRUARY BECAUSE OF PREVIOUS COMMITMENTS; AND (C) OBSERVE THAT THE CABINET WILL NOT MEET UNTIL TUESDAY, JANUARY 24, AND NO DECISION IS LIKELY TO BE TAKEN UNTIL THEN.

3. WITH REGARD TO THE ADVICE REQUESTED IN REFTTEL B, THE SITUATION WE FACE IS ESSENTIALLY THIS:

-- VORSTER APPEARS TO HAVE MADE A COMMITMENT TO ANNOUNCE A DATE FOR ELECTIONS DURING THE WEEK STARTING JANUARY 30. WE CANNOT BE SURE THAT THERE IS NOT SOME ELEMENT OF BLUFF IN THE WAY THIS POINT IS BEING USED BY SAG OFFICIALS, BUT I AM INCLINED TO TAKE THIS ONE SERIOUSLY.

-- VORSTER HAS NOT DECIDED HOW TO RESPOND TO THE FIVE'S INVITATION TO SET A DATE FOR THE NEW YORK TALKS AND IS NOT LIKELY TO DO SO UNTIL AFTER CONSULTING THE CABINET ON JANUARY 24.

-- THE LIKELY OPTIONS FOR THE SAG RESPONSE ARE:

(A) TO SET A DATE WITH AN INDICATION THAT BOTHA WILL PARTICIPATE;

(B) SET A DATE BUT SEND FOURIE;

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(C) SET NO DATE BUT ASK THE FIVE TO SUBMIT THEIR PROPOSALS.

4. IF THE FIVE POWERS ARE TO INFLUENCE VORSTER AND THE CABINET ON THE ELECTION DATE ANNOUNCEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN THE NEW YORK TALKS, I THINK IT WILL TAKE A DRAMATIC STEP SUCH AS LETTERS FROM THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE FIVE OR AT LEAST FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTERS TO BOTHA. THESE LETTERS SHOULD (A) STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NEW YORK PROXIMITY TALKS AND THE NEED TO AVOID ACTIONS THAT IN ANY WAY WOULD ADVERSELY EFFECT THE CHANCES FOR A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME; (B) URGE HIM TO PROPOSE AN EARLY DATE IN FEBRUARY WITH BOTHA ATTENDANCE; (C) RECOGNIZE THAT VORSTER MAY FIND IT NECESSARY TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT ELECTION DURING THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE BUT URGE THAT WHATEVER IS SAID IS COUCHED IN A WAY NOT TO PREJUDICE THE NEGOTIATION; (D) INDICATE THAT THE FIVE POWER PROPOSALS WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SAG SOON AND CERTAINLY IN TIME FOR CAREFUL CONSIDERATION PRIOR TO THE NEW YORK TALKS; (E) ACKNOWLEDGE THE SAG DESIRE TO SEE THE INDEPENDENCE PROCESS COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE YEAR AND PLEDGE TO WORK TOWARD THAT END. AN ADDED FEATURE WHICH I BELIEVE WOULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON VORSTER IS AN INDICATION THAT AT THE OUTSET OF THE NEW YORK TALKS THE FIVE FOREIGN

MINISTERS WOULD BE PREPARED TO MEET (SAY FOR A DAY) TO REVIEW THE FIVE-POWER PROPOSALS WITH THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES. I DO NOT KNOW HOW PRACTICAL THIS SUGGESTIONS IS, BUT I THINK IT WOULD MAKE IT HARDER FOR VORSTER AND BOTHA TO TURN ASIDE. DEPT WILL RECALL THAT AT LAST FRIDAY'S MEETING WITH BOTHA HE SEEMED TO COMPLAIN THAT HE WAS BEING ASKED TO COME TO NEW YORK TO NEGOTIATE WITH PERSONS OF LESSER RANK AND TO BE PUT ON A PAR WITH NUJOMA. THE OFFER TO RAISE THE TALKS TO A HIGHER LEVEL COULD BE DECISIVE IN CONVINCING THE SAG TO PARTICIPATE AND REFRAIN FROM ANNOUNCING A DATE. IT MIGHT ALSO SERVE TO PERSUADE NUJOMA TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE. TO AFRICAN LEADERS IT WOULD HIGHLIGHT THE EFFORT OF THE FIVE TO FIND A WORKABLE SOLUTION IN NAMIBIA.

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5. IF THE DECISION IS NOT TO USE A HIGH LEVEL APPEAL OF THE NATURE DESCRIBED ABOVE, I THINK THERE IS A BETTER THAN EVEN PROBABILITY THAT VORSTER WILL SAY SOMETHING IN THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE DAMAGING TO THE PROSPECTS FOR HOLDING THE PROXIMITY TALKS. IN THE FACE OF THAT POSSIBILITY, THE SCENARIO DESCRIBED IN PARA 2 OF REFTEL B IS AS GOOD AS CAN BE DEVISED. HOWEVER, RATHER THAN SIMPLY ASK FOR A CLARIFICATION OF INTENTIONS ON THE ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT, I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT WE URGE VORSTER TO USE GENERAL LANGUAGE THAT WOULD NOT PREJUDGE THIS IMPORTANT ASPECT UNTIL IT CAN BE DISCUSSED AT NEW YORK. IF HE WERE WILLING TO AVOID MENTIONING SPECIFIC DATES AND AGREE TO SEND BOTHA TO NEW YORK WE MAY STILL HAVE A FIGHTING CHANCE TO HOLD THE PROXIMITY TALKS. THE PROSPECTS WOULD BE GREATLY ENHANCED, HOWEVER, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO OFFER MINISTERIAL LEVEL TALKS AT LEAST IN THE INITIAL STAGES, LETTING THE CG WORK OUT DETAILS OF A SETTLEMENT PLAN.

6. REGRET DELAY IN RESPONDING TO DEPT'S MESSAGE. SINCE IT WAS NOT GIVEN NIACT IMMEDIATE PRECEDENCE IT DID NOT ARRIVE HERE UNTIL MONDAY MORNING WHEN I WAS IN CAPE TOWN. BOWDLER

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## Message Attributes

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